CLAIMS

1. A method in a computing system for providing targeted advertising messages, comprising:

reading a targeting plan, the targeting plan specifying:

test groups, each testing group having a target user share;

for each test group, a sequence of conditions to be applied to users in the test group;

for each condition of each test group, advertising treatments, each advertising treatment specifying an advertising message, each advertising treatment having a treatment subgroup having a target user share;

receiving advertising requests, each advertising request identifying a user;

for each received advertising request:

if the user identified by the advertising request has not yet been assigned to a test group and treatment subgroups,

assigning the identified user to one testing group selected in order to maintain the actual user shares of the testing groups near the target user shares;

for each condition of the assigned test group, assigning the identified user to one treatment subgroup for the condition selected in order to maintain the actual user shares of the treatment subgroups for the condition near the target user shares of the treatment subgroups for the condition;

applying the sequence of conditions for the test group to which the user is assigned; and

replying to the advertising request with the advertising message specified by the treatment of the treatment subgroup to which the identified user is assigned for the first condition satisfied in the applied sequence of conditions.

2. A method in a computing system for providing targeted advertising messages, comprising:

receiving advertising requests, each advertising request identifying a user;

4   for each received advertising request, applying a sequence of conditions to

5 information relating to the identified user; and

6   replying to the advertising request with an advertising message associated with

7 the first condition in the applied sequence that is satisfied.

1   3.   The method of claim 2, further comprising selecting a sequence of

2 conditions to apply from a plurality of sequences of conditions based upon the identity of the

3 identified user.

1   4.   The method of claim 2, further comprising selecting an advertising

2 message to reply with from a plurality advertising messages associated with the first

3 condition in the sequence that is satisfied based upon the identity of the identified user.

5   5.   A computing system for providing targeted advertising messages,

comprising:

        an advertising request receiver that receives advertising requests, each

advertising request identifying a user;

        a condition application subsystem that, for each received advertising request,

applies a sequence of conditions to information relating to the identified user; and

        an advertising message subsystem that replies to the advertising request with an

advertising message associated with the first condition in the sequence that is satisfied.

1   6.   A method in a computer system for targeting advertising messages to

2 users, comprising:

3   receive an advertising request originating with an identified user;

4   reading one or more variables relating to the identified user;

5   applying one or more of a set of conditions to the read variables to identify an

6 advertising approach to pursue with the identified user; and

7   responding to the received advertising request in accordance with the identified

8 approach.

7.   The method of claim 6 wherein the responding involves displaying an advertising message corresponding to the identified approach.

8.   The method of claim 6 wherein variables relating to the received request are read.

9.   The method of claim 8 wherein variables relating to a webpage that the identified user was visiting when the received request was originated are read.

10.   The method of claim 6 wherein variables relating to earlier activities by the identified user are read.

11.   The method of claim 10 wherein variables relating to aspects of earlier web browsing by the identified user are read.

12.   The method of claim 10 wherein variables relating to aspects of earlier commercial activities by the identified user are read.

13.   The method of claim 6 wherein variables relating global conditions are read.

14.   The method of claim 13 wherein variables relating to the current time are read.

15.   One or more computer memories collectively containing an advertising targeting data structure, comprising a plurality of entries, each entry corresponding to a user and containing:

information identifying a test group to which the user belongs, the identified test group indicating which of a plurality of sequences of conditions will be applied when an advertising request originating with the user is received; and

7 for each of the conditions of the indicated sequence of conditions, information

8 identifying a treatment subgroup to which the user belongs, the identified treatment subgroup

9 indicating which of a plurality of advertising treatments will be applied when the condition is

10 the first condition in the sequence of conditions to be satisfied.

1 16.   A method in a computing system for providing targeted advertising

2 messages, utilizing a targeting plan specifying test groups, each testing group having a target

3 user share; for each test group, one or more conditions to be applied to users in the test

4 group; and, for each condition of each test group, advertising treatments, each advertising

5 treatment having a treatment subgroup having a target user share;

6   receiving advertising requests, each advertising request identifying a user;

7   for each received advertising request:

8   if the user identified by the advertising request has not yet been assigned

9 to a test group and treatment subgroups,

10   assigning the identified user to one testing group selected in order

11 to maintain the actual user shares of the testing groups near the target user shares; and

12   for each condition of the assigned test group, assigning the

13 identified user to one treatment subgroup for the condition selected in order to maintain the

14 actual user shares of the treatment subgroups for the condition near the target user shares of

15 the treatment subgroups for the condition.

1 17.   A method in a computer system for performing dynamic user targeting,

2 comprising:

3   identifying a plurality of opportunities to target a selected user;

4   for each identified opportunity,

5   applying a set of conditions to information relating to the identified user

6 in order to place the user in one of a plurality of user segments for the extent of the

7 opportunity; and

8   for the extent of the opportunity, targeting the user as part of the user

9 segment in which the user was placed,

10 such that, at each new targeting opportunity, the user may be placed in a different user

11 segment than the user was placed in at the previous targeting opportunity.

1   18.   A method in a computer system for analyzing user targeting results,
2 comprising:

3   for an advertising targeting program having a plurality of independent
4 dimensions, selecting a dimension in which to perform a comparison;

5   for user targeting effectiveness metrics each having a value in each of the
6 independent dimensions, aggregating the metrics for each value of the selected dimension;
7 and

8   comparing the different values of the selected dimension by comparing the
9 corresponding aggregated metrics.

1   19.   The method of claim 18 wherein the selected dimension is comprised of
2 two or more testing groups each corresponding to a different user data analysis approach, and
3 wherein the effectiveness of the different user data analysis approaches is compared.

2   20.   The method of claim 18 wherein the selected dimension is comprised of
2 two or more advertising messages all displayed to users in the same segment, and wherein
3 the effectiveness of the different advertising messages for users in the segment is compared.

1   21.   One or more computer memories collectively containing an advertising
2 targeting result data structure reflecting the result of targeting using test groups, conditions
3 for each test groups, and treatment subgroups for each condition, the data structure
4 comprising:
5   for each distinct combination of (a) one of the test groups and (b) one treatment
6 subgroup for each of the conditions for the test group, an advertising effectiveness metric
7 aggregated across all users that are assigned to the test group and the treatment subgroup for
8 each of the conditions for the test group,
9 such that, to determine a level of effectiveness of the conditions of a test group, the
10 effectiveness metrics for users assigned to that test group may be aggregated,
11 and such that, to determine a level of effectiveness of a treatment of a treatment subgroup,
12 the effectiveness metrics for users assigned to that treatment may be aggregated.

1   22.   The computer memories of claim 21 wherein the effectiveness metric is

2 click-throughs.

1   23.   The computer memories of claim 21 wherein the effectiveness metric is

2 conversion rate.

1   24.   The computer memories of claim 21 wherein the effectiveness metric is

2 average sales.

1   25.   The computer memories of claim 21 wherein the effectiveness metric is

2 session length.

1   26.   The computer memories of claim 21 wherein the effectiveness metric is

2 user registration rate.

1   27.   A method in a computer system for selecting a category of advertising

2 messages for presentation to a customer, comprising:

3   defining a plurality of advertising message categories, each having one or more

4 messages;

5   compiling a profile of the customer with respect to the defined advertising

6 message categories;

7   when a request to present an advertisement to the customer is received,

8 selecting an advertising message category based on the customer's profile; and

9   presenting to the customer an advertising message of the selected advertising

10 message category.

1   28.   The method of claim 27, further comprising receiving demographic

2 information describing the customer, and wherein the profile is compiled using the received

3 demographic information.

1   29.   The method of claim 27, further comprising receiving behavioral

2   information describing the behavior of the customer, and wherein the profile is compiled

3   using the received behavioral information.